

THE CONFUSION OVER KERRY'S ANNULMENT

The Catholic League does not possess a theological micrometer that judges, with digital precision, how "good" a Catholic is. Furthermore, it is not our business anyway. But it is also true that we will not pretend disinterest in subjects that touch on the issue of Catholics in public life.

We noted with some interest that the *New York Times* reported on April 2 that Senator John Kerry "sought an annulment from the church when he was divorced from his first wife." Curiously, it did not say that the annulment was ever granted.

The April 5 edition of *Time* magazine carried an article about Senator Kerry that was even more interesting. It said of Kerry, "He is enough of a stickler for Catholic rules to have sought an annulment of his 18-year first marriage before marrying again."

But Kerry deserves no credit whatsoever because what *Time* said was patently false: Kerry did not seek an annulment until after he married Teresa Heinz in a civil ceremony in 1995. We contacted *Time* about the error and, to its credit, it ran a correction in its April 26 edition.

Kerry has made it very clear that he does not want to talk about the subject of his annulment. But he has also made it very clear that he considers himself to be "a practicing and believing Catholic." So what gives? Here's what we know.

Kerry got divorced from Julia Thorne, an Episcopalian, in 1988. He married Teresa Heinz in May 1995 in a civil ceremony. He never pursued an annulment of his first marriage until a year and a half after his second. When asked about this in February 1997, he said it was a private matter. That's fine, but on May 8, 1997, Kerry publicly joked about his quest for

an annulment on the Don Imus show.

Here's what Kerry told Imus: "Seventy-five percent of all annulments in the world take place in the United States, and I guess the figure drops to 50 percent if you take out all Massachusetts politicians." He continued saying, "It's one of those special Catholic things. It's like confession or feeling guilty about things you haven't even thought of doing."

On February 16, 2004, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported that Kerry's office didn't respond to several e-mail and telephone requests regarding the question of whether an annulment was granted. On March 23, 2003, the *Providence Journal-Bulletin* said that Kerry "will not say whether he obtained an annulment of his first marriage...." Why the reticence, especially since Kerry says his "current marriage is in good graces with the church?"

We stayed on this issue until we learned that Kerry did, in fact, receive an annulment. Had Kerry been forthright about the subject, all the speculation could have been avoided.